THE FOURTH DAY

2nd March 1922.

The Assembly met at 11-45 A. M. on Thursday, the 2nd March 1922.

21. Roads and Elephants.

Mr. R. Tait (Member, Central Travancore Planters' Association) represented that wild elephants were decidedly on the increase and that danger to human life and property resulting from their incursions was great, particularly in the Vandiperiyar area in the Devicolam Division. An Indian was killed by a rogue elephant on the boundary of the Heaven Valley Estate two months ago and in the present state of things more loss of human lives was expected. On one occasion, a rogue elephant damaged a culvert on the Pasumalai-Thungakal road, and on another occasion, a grass house was demolished and a large number of tea bushes was pulled out or mutilated beyond further use. It was no exaggeration to say that at present it was sheer waste of money to attempt to open a tea nursery at Vandiperiyar. The Member prayed that the matter might be thoroughly examined in all its aspects and adequate measures adopted for the protection of the District against the incursions of those animals.

The Member then urged the immediate necessity of improving the Kottayam-Kumili road and restoring the Peermade-Devicolam road. The former was a main road used by a large section of the public and the volume of traffic passing over it was considerable. There were a needlessly large number of deep cross drains between the 46th and 60th miles of the road, and of extremely sharp and dangerous corners between the 35th and 60th miles. The expense involved in the improvements suggested would be very small, but the condition of the road would be very much bettered thereby, adding materially to the safety and comfort of the people using it. He, therefore, requested that the conditions of the cross drains and corners might be examined and the road improved at an early date. As regards the other road, viz., the Peermade-Devicolam road, it was represented that in its present condition it was unfit to bear the large volume of traffic passing over it. In April 1921 a deputation waited on the Dewan when the Chief Engineer was also present, and they were given to understand that the necessary work on this road would be started immediately and that Rs. 10,000 would be spent during the current year. But though the year had well advanced, practically nothing had been done and it was proposed to spend only Rs. 5,140. He requested that the improvements might be treated as distinct from maintenance and that the re-making of the road be commenced at the earliest possible moment.

Dewan's reply.—You have spoken about two subjects. The first one is about the destruction and damage caused by wild elephants. This subject was brought up by Mr. Vincent last year, and, I found, on going into the matter then, that the Forest Department was making arrangements to extend elephant-catching operations. The question as to whether the pit system or the *khedda* system was preferable, having been settled in favour of the pit system, I said that arrangements would be made to extend elephant-catching operations. I also said that that was the only way in which Government could help you in putting down the ravages by wild elephants. I know from figures that elephant-catching operations were more extensive this year than last year, although the results were not equally good, there being greater mortality among the elephants caught this year. Our great difficulty in extending elephant-catching operations is the want of decoy elephants. We are making every effort to increase the number of such elephants. I believe that the Forest Department will be able to extend the operations from year to year. I also

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pointed out last year that, under Section 46 of the Forest Regulation, there was the right of protection both of person and property against wild elephants. If a man finds that a wild elephant is going to damage his property or attack his person, there is the right of private defence under which the elephant could be killed. I would invite your attention to the provisions of this Section. I don't think that it is possible for Government to do anything more. I believe you have arms. You can use them and you can train your people to use them in the exercise of the right of private defence.

In regard to roads, you have referred to the Kottayam-Kumili road. It is one of the arterial roads of the country and we are spending a good deal of money on it. Cross drains and sharp curves are, no doubt, a serious inconvenience. I believe that, with the opening of the ropeway, a portion of the money spent on the maintenance of the road could be set free and utilised for putting up culverts and removing the curves you have referred to.

In regard to the Peermade-Devicolam road, it is true that, at the Conference referred to by you, I said, having in view the great importance of that road not only to Peermade, but also to the whole of the High Range which it would open up, that Government would pay particular attention to that road. I also said that a sum of Rs. 10,000 would be ear-marked for that road. I do not understand why the P. W. D. has not begun to execute the work and why proposals have not been made for the utilisation of the amount. I shall inquire into the matter and do the needful.

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22. Certain suggestions for the development of commerce.

Mr. E. N. Eipe (Member, Trading Classes, Kottayam) pointed out that Travancore occupied a low position in the field of trade and commerce and that the Government were not doing anything to raise it from its deplorable level in that respect. The people experienced great difficulty and inconvenience and incurred needless expenditure in the transport of goods from place to place owing to lack of adequate means of communication. The first thing to be done was that the principal trading centres of the country should be linked together by means of railways for the steady progress and expansion of trade. One line of railway should be opened from Kottarakara to Alwaye. A company with a capital of one crore of rupees might be floated, the Government taking a substantial number of shares, in which case the people would also readily come forward to purchase shares. Referring to the deputation of the Senior Assistant Account officer to study the working of the State Banks in Mysore and Baroda and to the necessity of opening a State Bank in Travancore, the Member prayed that early orders might be passed on his report. He also requested to be favoured with information as to the conditions regarding the grant of concessions to the Quilon Bank and enquired if the Government had considered whether there were no other Banks in the State superior to the Quilon Bank in the matter of paid-up capital and efficiency of management. Lastly, he prayed that agents might be appointed in important Indian centres of trade at the cost of the Government for popularising the commercial products of Travancore. Owing to the absence of agents in other countries, the goods produced here did not find a steady market in those countries.

Dewan's reply.—The extension of the railway from Kottarakara to Alwaye and the opening of a State Bank have already been dealt with in my address and in the answers given to some of the representations. The suggestion regarding the appointment of commercial agents at the chief trading centres will be considered by Government. The Director of Industries has already announced that he would act as a commercial agent, and I trust that his services would be fully utilised by the public in that capacity. He would in fact perform the duties of an information bureau. People may place their enquiries with him, and they would then get the sort of information they want.